k Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait MI1
Bedouins MJ4
Arabs M10

CHAPTER XIV

# Death, Burial and the Hereafter

If conditions permit, and water is available, a dead person is always washed, clothed in new linen, and then buried. If, as commonly occurs among the Badawin, these preliminaries are not possible, a hole is dug near the tent and the corpse buried with all speed. B 764

Women wash the bodies of women, and men those of men, never otherwise.

After a desert battle, the victors endeavour to bury their own dead but never those of the enemy, which are left to be eaten by the birds of the air and hyenas, as occurred in the battle of Ingair in 1929. The defeated party may, if they can, come and bury their dead at a later date—but this is of rare occurrence. B 764 727

Among the Badawin, mourning continues for three or four days, the women weeping and the men receiving guests who come to offer condolence.

On the evening of the death, a dinner must be given to the mourning guests, according to the means of the family.

Among Muslim townspeople generally (but not in Najd or Kuwait), a regular burial service, led by an *'alim* or priest, is held at the time of the burial, after which members of the family come to the grave every Friday and recite prayers or verses from the Qur'an. A 765

Those holding the Wahhabi doctrines and more especially the 'Ikhwan, bury simply and quickly, believing that once a man is dead his body is of no further account. A tomb is therefore anathema to the Wahhabis and they tolerate no monuments of any sort.

Among Kuwait Shi'ahs, and also in Iraq, a death is followed by a period of three days' mourning of an official family nature (*fathiha*). Crowds gather daily to pay condolences and mourn, and on the third night a priest recites prayers and recitations. A well-to-do person gives free lunches to his neighbours each day, and a big dinner on the third night to relatives and special mourners. k 765

k Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
Bedouins MJ4

## Appendix VII

in war or peace, and are at all times guarded with the greatest care and have their own special herdsmen.

The *Shuruf* can best be compared to the famous *Markab* or "Ark of Ishmael" which goes before the Rawala host when the latter tribe migrates to new regions or marches to war, and which is really nothing but a glorified ladies' camel litter, decked all over with black ostrich feathers (see under chapter dealing with the Tent and its treasures), but held in the deepest reverence by every single man and woman of the tribe.

As in the case of the *Markab*, the *Shuruf* is the rallying point of the tribe if attacked or in difficulties. The herd must be defended at all costs, and the tribe will cheerfully lose all its other camels in a battle or raid provided the *Shuruf* are safe.

In the attack, and especially if such be in the nature of a forlorn hope, the *Shuruf* have the place of honour always and lead the van. No Mutairi ever rides them, and they just move forward in a compact well-trained black mass ahead of the fighting men as if perfectly understanding the game. The latter will follow straight on to victory or death in their wake. The *Shuruf* seem also to know that they afford a sort of moving wall of protection for the footmen in their rear, and never scatter.

In peace time the famous black herd always grazes alone and under specially selected guards, always too as far from the common gaze as possible. It is said that should other strange camels get mixed up with them, the black herd will attack them and drive them out. Nor are the cows of the herd allowed to breed except from their own males.

To-day the *Al Shuruf* are in the hands of the great 'Abdul 'Aziz al Sa'ud —King and Lord of Arabia. They were taken away from the Mutair as the most severe punishment that could be meted out to them after Faisal al Duwish's rebellion of 1929–30, and are to-day (1939) most carefully guarded and looked after for the King by the faithful Shaikh Faisal bin Shiblan, head of the Jiblan sept of the great Mutair. Actually the King handed the *Shuruf* over to his brother Muhammad al Sa'ud for safe keeping after the above-mentioned rebellion, but this was a mere formality, for H.M. King 'Abdul 'Aziz' brand adorns the rear off hind quarter of each camel like this, $\circ\!|\!\circ$, and the herd remains the King's property, much as in the occident any war flags captured from an enemy are handed over to the King.

As far as I am aware, my wife and I are the only Europeans living who have had the opportunity of setting eyes on this jealously guarded herd and semi-sacred tribal emblem of the Mutair. This was on 7th April and 14th April, 1939, when, by special invitation of His Highness the Shaikh of Kuwait, King Bin Sa'ud sent his private camels numbering seventy-five *Raiyah* or herds, together with the *Shuruf* (some 4,500 all told) into the Araifjan and Shu'aiba districts of Kuwait to graze, the act being a gracious appreciation on the part of Shaikh Ahmad for Bin Sa'ud's good will and